

## **“Pomegranate”**

**Narration:** Afghanistan is a country where most of the population works in the agricultural sector. In Afghanistan, incomes are also mainly generated from the trade of agricultural products. Pomegranate, and more particularly Kandahar pomegranate, is one of Afghanistan’s world famous agricultural products. More than thousands of pomegranate orchards are located in Kandahar province.

Because of the lack of security, the lack of market opportunities and the lack of export opportunities caused by three decades of war, Afghanistan’s farmers had become hopeless. However, hope for a better future slowly came back with the cooperation of the new government of Afghanistan which was set up in 2001, and thanks to direct support of the USG. Thanks to USAID’s financial and technical support, Omid-e-Bahar fruit processing factory was established in Kabul. This factory has brought substantial changes to the life of pomegranate farmers across the country, and especially in Kandahar province.

**Abdulrahman, Deputy Director of OmidBahar:** This is a private company. Its establishment was a good development. It was supported by the Afghan government, and also by USAID. USAID provided us with generators as we did not have electricity; they also helped build cold rooms as we were lacking some; and they even provided us with cardboard boxes so that we could export the products.

**Marshall S. Ferrin, Senior Advisor, Investment, USAID:** The USG believes that the future of Afghanistan is generally going to be determined by the creation of thousands of jobs for Afghans to have a better life. The creation of sustainable employment for Afghan people is the sole purpose of our policy regarding economic development.

**Qasim Hamid, Head of Operations:** These machines were acquired with the support of USAID and the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. All the equipment was set up by the Italian company Bartozi, and the building was inaugurated on 15 October 2009. Our six operators were present while the machines were being installed, so that they could learn how to properly operate them. I believe that they now can manage them professionally. Furthermore, we provided them with 15 days of practical training after the end of the installation. This training allowed to identify and to solve the technical problems we previously had. Today, we are able to properly operate the equipment and to produce excellent products which we can export.

**Narration:**Kandahar pomegranate is 100%natural. There have always been international customers for this product. The Afghan government and the American peoplehelped pomegranate farmers sell their products according to that of the following three categories they belonged to. The first category is that of products which are exported abroad, and the second category is that of products which are sold on Afghanistan's internal market. Do you wonder which products belong to the third category?This is somethingyou will find out in this documentary.

**Narration:**This is a pomegranate orchard in Kandahar province. You can see that most of the farmers are busy. If the OmidBahar fruit processing factorydid not exist, many of them would not have an occupation.Specific cardboard boxes are created from trees. Afterwards, all the pomegranates collected from the trees are gathered in one place, and storedinside the boxes.The boxes are then delivered to the markets of Kandahar. Most of the businessmen are now busy with this occupation, and achieving this was one of the goals behind the American people's support to Afghanistan.

**A middleman in Kandahar:**If there were no markets, who wouldbuy pomegranates from the farmers? Everyonebenefitsfrom this situation. Afghan factories are processing the fruits here in Afghanistan to makeproducts such as jam and juice and then exportthese products abroad.Everyone benefitsfrom this: farmers, businessmen, and workers.

**Narration:**Pomegranates are deliveredto the OmidBahar factory in Kabul, where they are stored, bya specific transportation company. The existence of the factory therefore also represents an important source of income for the transportation company and the drivers.

**Narration:**Omid Bahar factory is well organized according to international standards.When one enters the factory,one has the feeling that theyare no longer Afghanistan.In fact, one would not expect that such a beautiful factory,in line with high international standards,could be built in our country.The cleanliness of every part of the factory, the management and the discipline of the staff all are very impressive.

**Narration:**The first machine pomegranates go through is the washing machine.

**A Cleaning Expert:**This machine was specifically designed to wash fruits.After the fruits have been liftedup,a spray washes the fruits with chlorinated water.

**Narration:** This machine washes pomegranates with clean water, under the supervision of the responsible staff. Pomegranates which cannot be used are put into a bin to be recycled. Afterwards, pomegranates go through another machine which separates the skin from the seeds. This function is really interesting, and this machine does it very quickly and properly. The seeds then go through another machine, called the “pressing machine”, which applies pressure on the seeds to separate them from the pomegranate juice. The liquid obtained then goes through a filter machine twice, so that the final pomegranate juice does not contain any seeds.

**Qasim Hamid, Head of Operations:** The seeds then go to the trash, and the pomegranate juice directly goes to the main tank.

**Narration:** Afterwards, a sample of the pomegranate juice is sent to a professional laboratory, where its suitability for consumption is verified.

**Dr. Toryalai Mohmad, Head of Laboratory:** It is important to check the quality of the juice and to ensure that the treatment dose is finalized.

**Narration:** The pomegranate juice then goes to another machine, which heats it at 90 degrees to make concentrated juice.

**Head of Operations:** After the juice has been boiled at 90 degrees, it is cooled down in another machine. The juice then goes to several tanks.

**Narration:** Omid Bahar also has the capacity to produce juice from different fruits of the country. They produce best quality juices and sell them on the market.

**Narration:** Afterwards, the concentrated juice of pomegranate is put into vacuum plastic bags of 250 KGs, which are made in Italy. The juice is then distributed across the country and abroad in special barrels.

We can be very proud of the fact that factories in the UK are asking this factory for extracted products, which is the case of only a few other countries.

**Abdulrahman, Deputy Director:** In 2009, we sold the concentrated pomegranate juice to a UK company for the first time. This company is named “Pomegranate”. Last year, we also exported the juice to an Afghan-owned company located in Kyrgyzstan. Our juice is also bought by an Afghan factory located in Darul Aman. Furthermore, our customers also include big companies such as Nestle.

**Marshall S. Ferrin:** This is one of the most interesting aspects of this whole operation. While the factory started working with pomegranates – many of which

come from Kandahar, this project made it look at other juices as well, and in particular into the mulberry juice – which they were able to develop from Panjshir. The factory will be buying more next season from both Panjshir and Parwan. This operation has also prompted an interest by a US investor to set up a factory for juices in Kandahar as well.

So this is an example of a collaboration which started off in one area with one product – pomegranate, and then branched off to mulberry. Apricots and apples have been brought in as well. So a full line of juice products has been created, which competes effectively against imported juice, are of better quality, and are currently being exported to countries around the region. There are also plans to export to the US. This creates several hundreds of formal jobs, and several thousands of incomes to farmers in all these different parts of Afghanistan.

**Narrator:** Thanks to support from the American people, the third category of Afghanistan's pomegranate products can also be exported. This provides an income to many Afghan farmers and helps develop our country's economy.

**A farmer from Kandahar:** We are glad that Omid Bahar factory was established. Now, its businessmen keep asking us for fruits. We used to have difficulties selling our products, but since the establishment of this factory, I have noticed that businessmen are always asking us for fruits. We are really happy that Omid Bahar factory now exists.